

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested. Claims 1-16 have been canceled. Claims 17-50 are newly added. No new matter has been added.

Original claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) based on U.S. Patent no. 6,396,940 of Carrott et al. ("Carrott"). Claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Carrott in view of U.S. Patent no. 6,511,426 of Hossack et al. ("Hossack").

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections. The amendments to the claims are made only to place the claims in what Applicants believe is better form to protect the invention. The amendments are not made in response to the rejections or to comply with any statutory requirement of patentability, since no such amendments are believed to be necessary.

New claim 17 recites:

17. (New) A method comprising:

simultaneously displaying a plurality of cross-sectional images of a subject, each in a separate display area on a display device; and
enabling a user to selectively alter a display format of one of the display areas while the images are being displayed, to change a relationship between the images.

The cited references do not disclose or suggest such a method, either individually or in combination. In particular, neither reference discloses or suggests enabling a user to selectively alter a display format of a display area, of multiple display areas that display cross-sectional images of a subject, while the images are being displayed, to change a relationship between the displayed images.

Carrott relates to a technique for correlating images from two different modalities, such as ultrasonic and x-ray images. Carrott discloses that to accomplish this, various transformations are applied to the coordinates of certain images, such as translation rotation, and scale multiplication. See abstract. However, in contrast with claim 17, the transformations are performed before the images are displayed. See col. 8, lines 55-61. Carrott does not disclose or suggest that such operations are done while the images are displayed, as recited in claim 1. Carrott further states that the visual output can be displayed "in various forms" and that "[v]arious display formats can be used to allow the simultaneous display of both data sets . . ." Col. 8, lines 61-67. However, there is no suggestion that the display formats can be changed dynamically, i.e., while the images are being displayed.

Hossack also fails to disclose or suggest the above-noted features of claim 17. For at least the foregoing reasons, therefore, claim 17 and all claims which depend on it are patentable over the cited art.

Each of the other pending independent claims contains limitations similar to those in claim 17 discussed above, and for similar reasons, therefore, is patentable over the cited art along with its dependent claims.

In addition, independent claims 28, 36 and 43 (and certain dependent claims) also recite that the images are real-time images of the subject. The cited references do not disclose performing the above-noted operations with real-time images. This ability is advantageous because, for example, it enables a doctor to more precisely determine the position of a biopsy needle he is controlling during an invasive medical procedure.

Therefore, claims 28, 36 and 43 and all claims which depend on them are further patentable over the cited art for this additional reason.

Further regarding independent claims 28 and 36 (and certain dependent claims), the cited references do not disclose or suggest performing a method such as recited above, where each of the displayed images represents a different cross-sectional slice of the subject. Therefore, claims 28 and 36 and all claims which depend on them are further patentable over the cited art for this additional reason.

Further regarding independent claim 36 (and certain dependent claims), the cited references do not disclose or suggest enabling a user to selectively alter a display format of any one or more of multiple display areas simultaneously displayed on a display device, while the images are being displayed, to change a spatial relationship between the images. Therefore, claim 36 and all claims which depend on it are further patentable over the cited art for this additional reason.

Dependent Claims

In view of the above remarks, a specific discussion of the dependent claims is considered to be unnecessary. Therefore, Applicants' silence regarding any dependent claim is not to be interpreted as agreement with, or acquiescence to, the rejection of such claim or as waiving any argument regarding that claim.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly requested.

If any additional fee is required, please charge Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,
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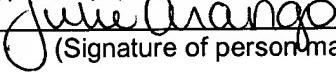
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